

Friday May 21st 1965.

HIGHNAM COURT

HIGHNAM

GLOUCESTER

TEL. GLOUCESTER 22703

How good, how very kind you are
being to me, Dearest C.

Less than 2 hours after your card
from Marbella reached me Alice
came to give me the joyful tidings
of your safe return. You can
imagine how delighted & relieved
I was to hear that, on reaching
Wylze, you found my parcel awaiting
you. Thank goodness for that.

I'm afraid you'll find a good
deal of Dame Edith's autobiography
rather depressing; but I hope
as a revelation of a unique
personality - so much maligned
& misunderstood - you will at least
find it interesting in parts. "To

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know all is to forgive all," as the French
say, & when one thinks what her childhood
& youth were like as the victim of
her mother's dislike & ever looking
fault-finding, one feels inclined
to forgive not all, but much of what
was obviously disharteful in her make up.

I haven't forgotten, dearest Colin,
that on returning to Bristol, you still
have to search for a suitable office,
a suitable secretary & — most important
of all — a house that may be turned
into a delightful, restful home. I have
sighed a little that in time you may
grow to like as much as Day
likes his cot.

Am rather extra - poorly today
& that being so, I know that
out of the kindness of your immensely
kind heart, you will forgive so
short & dull a letter from ^{your ever loving} Uncle M.

Leclaire Rattlerce, Esq^r

Re St. Regis Hotel

New York City

Saturday

Dear Mr. Rattlerree,

I am glad to

hear from you and to meet

you again, and to meet

you wife, at the Gotham

Book Mart on Tuesday.

It was a

Will Honor the Sitwells

Town Hall Arranges Luncheon After Their Lecture Nov. 8

Town Hall will give a luncheon to honor Dr. Edith Sitwell and Sir Osbert Sitwell in the Starlight Roof of the Waldorf-Astoria, Nov. 8, following a lecture by the Sitwells in Town Hall as a gesture to Anglo-American understanding in the arts. Honor guests will include the Marquess of Milford-Haven, Lady Ribblesdale, Mildred Countess of Gosford, Count Lanfranco Rasponi, Mrs. Jonathan Peterson, Mrs. Victor G. Heiser, Mrs. Edna Woolman Chase, Mrs. Carmel Myers Snow and Baron Nicolas de Gunzburg.

These members of the Sitwell family will deliver this year's Jonathan Peterson Foundation lecture, established as an annual event by Mrs. Victor G. Heiser, in memory of her father, to further understanding among English-speaking peoples. The Sitwells are the second literary people to hold this lectureship, H. G. Wells having preceded them in 1940. The Earl of Lytton, Sir Josiah Stamp, Sir Alexander Cadogan and Viscount Halifax were earlier lecturers.

Mr. Leclau Rattler

The Gotham Book Mart and The Vanguard Press

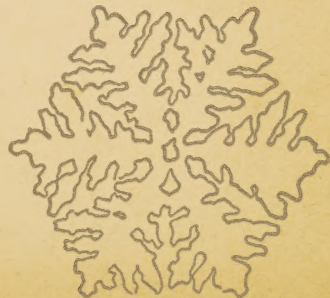
cordially invite you to meet

DR. EDITH SITWELL &

SIR OSBERT SITWELL

on Tuesday, November ninth

five to seven P.M.



R.S.V.P.

The Gotham Book Mart
41 West 47th Street
New York 19, N.Y.



BRACELETS AND CAPE, EDITH RECITES IN TOWN HALL

The Sitwells CONTINUED

THEY HAD FUN POSING



IN WIRE AND WAX Edith Sitwell was sculptured by Pavel Tchelitchev, a well-known semisurrealist painter. He did not have Edith sit for this work (she is looking in a mirror) because he said he was already familiar with



A COLLECTION OF POETS came to a cocktail party at New York City's Gotham Book Mart to pay homage to the visiting Sitwells. Left foreground: William Rose Benét. Behind him: Stephen Spender. Behind him: Horace Gregory and his wife, Marya Zaturenska. Behind the seated Sitwells are (*left to right*) Playwright-Poet

Tennessee Williams, Richard Eberhart, Novelist-Poet Gore Vidal and José García Villa. On the ladder is W. H. Auden. Standing against the bookcase (*right*): Elizabeth Bishop. Seated in front of her is Marianne Moore. Seated at the right: Randall Jarrell (with mustache), Delmore Schwartz. On the floor: Charles Henri Ford.

**The Leclare Bush Ratterree, Jr. and Shirley Scott Ratterree Collection
of
Publications and Memorabilia Related to Edith Sitwell (1887-1964)**

The Collection:

Leclare Bush Ratterree, Jr. obtained a Master's Degree from Columbia University in 1947, based on a thesis entitled, "An Introduction to the Poetry Edith Sitwell." He and his wife were part of the literary scene in New York City when Edith Sitwell and her brother Osbert came to the United States to deliver a series of public lectures and performances, which were chronicled in the newspapers and *Life Magazine*. The Ratterrees participated in those events and gatherings. The resulting collection of Sitwell books and other materials, which are being donated to the Internet Archive, are listed below.

Publications by Edith Sitwell:

Sitwell, Edith, 1924, *The Sleeping Beauty*, New York City: Alfred A. Knopf.

Sitwell, Edith, 1926, *Edith Sitwell*, London: Ernest Benn Limited, Augustan Books of Modern Poetry edited by Edward Thompson. (Two copies: one with loose cover, the other missing front cover.)

Sitwell, Edith, 1926, *Elegy on Dead Fashion*, London: Duckworth. (Copy #15 of 225 copies printed and 200 for sale. Autographed by author.)

Sitwell, Edith, 1926, *Poetry and Criticism*, New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Sitwell, Edith, 1927, *Rustic Elegies*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Sitwell, Edith, 1928, *Popular Song*, London: Faber and Gwyer Ltd. (Special printing, copy #72, autographed by author; design and drawings by Edward Bawden.)

Sitwell, Edith, 1929, *Gold Coast Customs*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Sitwell, Dame Edith, [1933] 1957, *English Eccentrics*, New York: Vanguard Press. (Two copies.)

Sitwell, Edith, [1936] 1947, *Victoria of England*, London: Faber and Faber.

Sitwell, Edith, 1942, *English Women*, London: William Collins and New York: Hastings House.

Sitwell, Edith, 1943, *Street Songs*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd.

Sitwell, Edith, 1944, *A Poet's Notebook*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd.

Sitwell, Edith, 1946, *Fanfare for Elizabeth*, New York: The Macmillan Company.

Sitwell, Edith, 1946, *Fanfare for Elizabeth*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd. (Inscribed by the author to Miss E. A. Braun.)

Sitwell, Edith, 1947, *The Shadow of Cain*, London: John Lehmann.

Sitwell, Edith, 1948, *The Song of the Cold*, New York: The Vanguard Press. (Inscribed by the author to Mr. Leclaire Ratterree.)

Sitwell, Edith, [1949] 1954, *The Collected Poems of Edith Sitwell*, New York: The Vanguard Press.

Sitwell, Edith, 1950, *A Poet's Notebook*, Boston: Little Brown and Company. (Contains both *A Notebook on William Shakespeare* and *A Poet's Notebook* previously published separately in 1944; there are two copies of this book.)

Sitwell, Edith, [1942] 1997, *English Women*, London: Prion.

Sitwell, Edith, n.d., "Famous Poet Describes Rare Hazards of Sitting for Portrait." (A clipping from periodical *Houston Now*, pg. 8.)

By Edith Sitwell with Other Family Members:

Sitwell, Edith and Osbert Sitwell and Sacherverell Sitwell, 1925, *Poor Young People*. London: The Fleuron. (Special printing, copy # 193 of 375 copies printed and 350 for sale.)

Collections of Poems Edited by Edith Sitwell:

Sitwell, Edith, ed., 1941, *Look! The Sun*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.

Sitwell, Edith, ed., 1944, *Planet and Glow-Worm, A Book for the Sleepless*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd.

Sitwell, Dame Edith, ed. 1958, *The Atlantic Book of British and American Poetry*, Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, an Atlantic Monthly Press book.

Collections of Poems and Letters of Edith Sitwell Edited by Others:

Morton, Gerald W. and Karen P. Helgeson, *The Early Unpublished Poems of Edith Sitwell*, New York: Peter Lang, American University Studies.

Lehmann, John and Derek Parker, eds. 1970, *Edith Sitwell Selected Letters*, London: Macmillan.

Collections Edited by Edith Sitwell with Others

Sitwell, Edith et al., 1916, *Wheels: An Anthology of Verse*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sitwell, Edith et al., 1917, *Wheels: A Second Cycle*, Oxford: B.H. Blackwell. (This copy was owned by Peter M. Jack, *New York Times Book Review* critic, who drew striking caricatures of Sitwell on inside cover.)

Sitwell, Edith et al., 1918, *Wheels: A Third Cycle*, London: B.H. Blackwell.

Books About Edith Sitwell

Bowra, C. M., *Edith Sitwell, Contemporary British Poets*, Monaco: Lyrebird Press.

Brophy, James D., 1968, *Edith Sitwell, The Symbolist Order*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Press and London and Amsterdam: Feffer & Simons, Inc.

Villa, Jose Garcia, ed., 1948, *A Celebration for Edith Sitwell on the Occasion of Her Visit to the United States*, New York: New Directions 7

Anthologies Including Poems by Edith Sitwell:

Lewis, C. Day, D. Kilham Roberts, and Rosamond Lehman, eds., 1946, *Orion*, Volume 3, London: Nicholson & Watson. (Includes one poem by Edith Sitwell.)

Herring, Robert, 1942, *Life and Letters To-day*, Vol. 35 no. 64. (Includes one poem by Edith Sitwell.)

Publications by Other Members of the Sitwell Family:

Sitwell, Osbert, 1923, *Out of the Flame*, London: Grant Richards Ltd.

Sitwell, Sir Osbert, 1948, *Laughter in the Next Room*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Sitwell, Sir George, [1909] 1951, *On the Making of Gardens*, London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. and New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Edith Sitwell Correspondence and News Clippings Regarding Her Trip to New York City in 1948:

Edith Sitwell came to the United States with her brother, Osbert Sitwell, to put on a number of readings and performances in November 1948. Leclare Ratterree, Jr. and his wife Shirley Scott Ratterree attended a reading at Town Hall, a performance at the Museum of Modern Art, and a reception that gathered illustrious writers at the Gotham Book Mart on November 9, 1948. The following related materials are included in the collection:

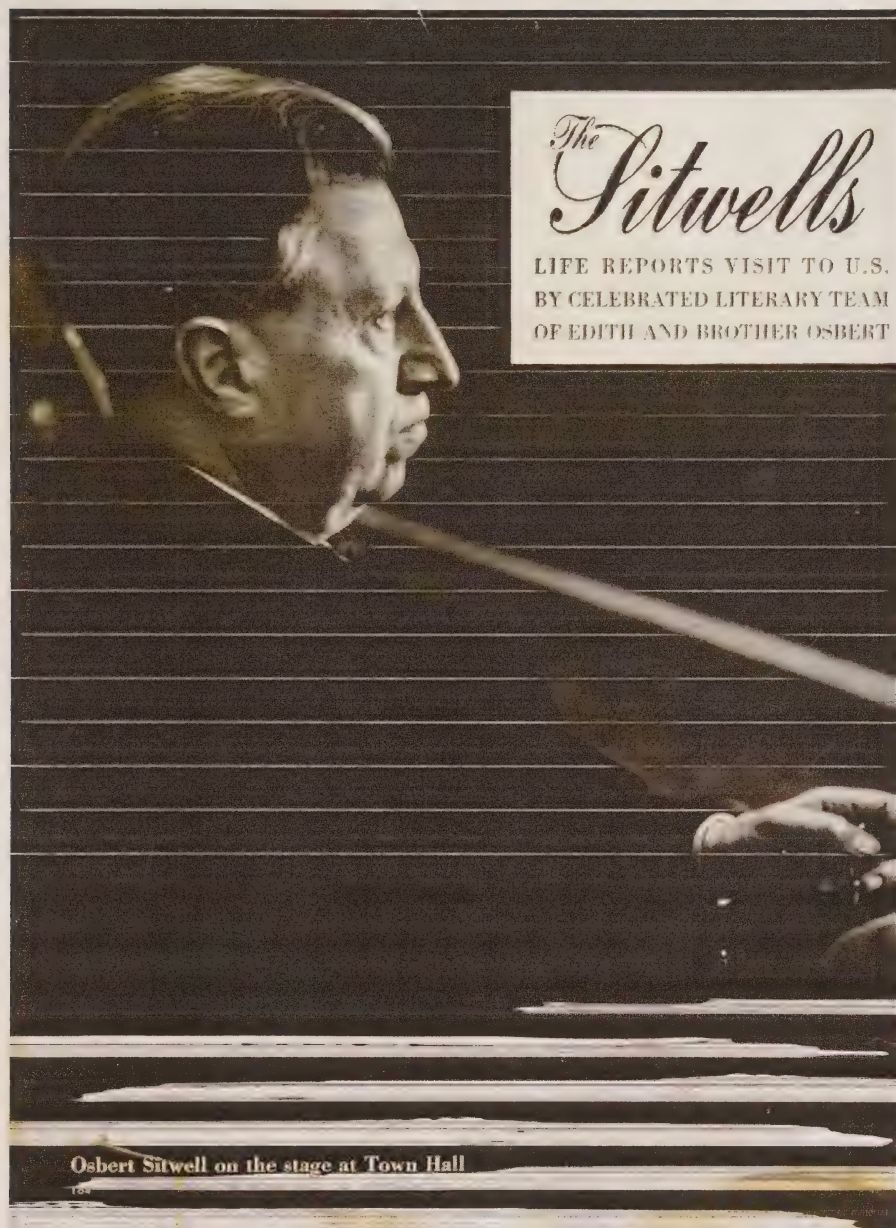
- Two invitations to Leclare B. Ratterree II to meet Edith and Osbert Sitwell at the Gotham Book Mart on November 9, 1948.
- A note from Edith Sitwell, on St. Regis Hotel stationery, thanking Leclare Ratterree and his wife, Shirley Ratterree, for attending the Gotham Book Mart gathering.
- Museum of Modern Art, press release for Edith Sitwell's presentation of *Façade*, with music by William Walton, dated January 19. (A list of Sitwell-Walton poems and songs is handwritten on the back.)
- Pictures clipped from a *Life Magazine* article (December 6, 1948), "The Sitwells," about their trip to the United States, including the now famous photo of writers gathered at the Gotham Book Mart, one of Edith reciting her poetry at the Town Hall, and another of a wire and wax sculpture of Edith by Pavel Techlitchew.
- News clippings describing the Town Hall event and a luncheon in honor of the Sitwells at the Waldorf Astoria.



Poets at the Gotham Book Mart (*Life Magazine*, December 6, 1948): Edith Sitwell and Osbert Sitwell (center) surrounded by William Rose Benet, Stephen Spender, Horace Gregory, Marya Zatureada, Tennessee Williams, Richard Eberhart, Gore Vidal, Jose Garcia Villas, W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, Marianne More, Randall Jerrell, Delmore Schwartz, Charles Henri Ford

Manuscript:

Leclaire B. Ratterree Jr., "Notes for Lecture," which outlines in 7 pages a talk he gave about Edith Sitwell's biography, poetry, and aesthetic vision, and is probably based on his 1947 Columbia University MA Thesis, "An Introduction to the Poetry of Edith Sitwell."



The Sitwells

LIFE REPORTS VISIT TO U.S.
BY CELEBRATED LITERARY TEAM
OF EDITH AND BROTHER OSBERT

Osbert Sitwell on the stage at Town Hall

Her thoughtful, earnest, somewhat austere countenance further an impression of her serious, unostentatious character. Her eyes, which were almost always closed, showed a certain reserve. At night, in her study, she would sit up late, reading or writing. She was a great reader, and her knowledge of literature was extensive. She was also a great writer, and her works were widely read. She was a member of the Royal Society, and she was elected a foreign member of the Académie Française. She was also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She was a great friend of many of the leading writers of her time, and she was a great supporter of the arts. She was a great woman, and her life was a great example to us all.



Edith Sitwell on the stage at Town Hall



SNOWED UNDER by snoggetts at party given for her at Gotham Book Mart, Edith Sitwell clutches a highball while Sir Osbert (center) leans over her worriedly.



TWO MUSICAL PERSONAGES chat with Edith *Belin* at Waldorf party. They are Composer and Gita Virgil Thomson and Harpsichord Player Wanda Landowska.



A PRINCESS, Alexandra Kropotkin, the White Russian author of fancy cookbooks, chatted constantly with Edith at a party given by Edith's publisher, Vanguard Press.

The Sitwells CONTINUED



OSBERT AND NOVELIST, A. J. Cronin, author of *Reck of the Bannockburn*, watch their own at a Ritz-Carlton party given by their publishers, Little, Brown and Co.



EDITH AND MARQUESS, Milford Haven, who was best man at Princess Elizabeth's wedding, joke at Waldorf luncheon. When speeches began he thumped the stick.

THEY BRAVE NEW YORK

In the process of being lionized along the eastern seaboard the Sitwells have behaved more like lambs than lions. They gave a joint reading of their poetry at Town Hall, where the largely female audience hustled inside in and out during the program, but the Sitwells patiently read on. At big cocktail parties they surprised everyone by their polite habit of shaking hands with and saying goodbye to everybody. At appointments they were punctual to the second. While Edith had the flu Sir Osbert dashed off to give lectures at Montreal and Buffalo, and they hope to lecture in Wisconsin and Sarasota, Fla. In only one respect did they suggest the flamboyance of their early youth: Edith swept around New York looking like a medieval sorceress, in flowing capes and gowns topped off by a vermillion turban. Edith insisted she never tried to shock people. "Who would purposely try to annoy the public?" she asked at a press conference. "I would," cut in Sir Osbert curily. "Frequently have."



A CRITIC, Ernest Evans of New York *Herald Tribune*, gives Osbert a chance to light up. Sitwells commented on "kindness and generosity" of all Americans they met.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 102

COLDS

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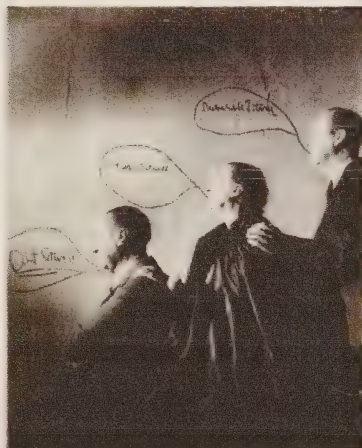
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The Sitwells CONTINUED

THEY HAD FUN POSING



IN WAX AND WAX. Smith is sculptured by David T. Smith, a well-known semi-realistic painter. He did not have Edith sit for this work featured above in front of mirror because he said he was already familiar with her face. He has done other portraits of her by mixing paint and sculpture.



LIKE COME-STRIP CHARACTERS these Sitwells were posed by the photographer Brown and his camera coming out of their pockets. We thought the women looked so good in their costumes, and the photographer and his assistants had a lot of fun posing them.

FOR EXOTIC PORTRAITS



EDITH SITWELL AMONG THE LILIES is title which Photographer Cecil Beaton gave to this picture which he took in his Paris studio for Vogue. Miss Sitwell thinks that he meant to imitate figures carved on top of medieval coffins. It was meant for a joke, but she adds that she is "rather fond of it."



EDITH PLAYING THE HARP is another Cecil Beaton photograph, which accompanies her medieval gown. Edith does not care much for picture, saying, "I hope heaven will play the harp, and I'm thinking over my repertoire now, but I don't much longer. I think it will be Debussy—he sounds well on the harp."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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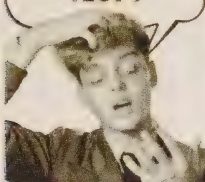


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TUNE IN "The Adventures of Sam Spade" Sun. evgs., CBS Network.

The Sitwells CONTINUED



THE SITWELL FAMILY was painted by Sargent in March 1900. Left to right: Edith; her father, Sir George; her mother, Lady Ida; Sacheverell; Osbert.

THEY SPRANG FROM A FABULOUS FAMILY

The Sitwells are not snobbish about their ancestors, but they are very much aware of them. In his autobiography Sir Osbert invites the public to behold his strange and wonderful forebears. There are the Plantagenet kings who gave Edith her long nose. There is Lady Gresham, who was said to be the mistress of King George IV; Arabella Churchill, the mistress of James II and also an ancestor of Winston Churchill; the great Duke of Wellington, who defeated Napoleon. There is also Sir **Sitwell Sitwell**, who in 1806 built a ballroom over his castle especially to throw a party for the Prince Regent, and the fabulously rich grandfathers, the Earl and Countess of Londesborough, who had a mile of scarlet carpet spread from their villa to the sea whenever the earl went for a dip. But the prize exhibit of the regal side-show was the Sitwells' orange-bearded father, the late Sir George, fourth baronet and Lord of the Manor of Long Hedingham, who never stopped changing the landscape in the 5,000-acre estate of Retham Hall, the lunatic seat, and who tried to beautify the scene by painting blue Chinese characters on his white cows, which wouldn't stand for it.

Sir George was cool to his children's literary ambitions. "My cousin," he said, "had a friend who killed himself by writing a novel." And he once decided that "Edith made a great mistake by not going in for law renals." Cruelly or ludicrously, Sir George tried to teach his children worldly wisdom. When Osbert at 21 was sent in World War I to fight with the Grenadier Guards in front-line trenches, his father counseled him, "Directly you hear the first shell, retire... to the cellar, and remain there quietly until all firing has ceased... Keep warm and have plenty of plain, nourishing food at frequent but regular intervals. And, of course, plenty of rest."

In *Left Hand, Right Hand*, the first volume of his four-volume autobiography, Sir Osbert tells how the great American painter, John Singer Sargent, came to paint the family portrait (above). "Every second day for five or six weeks we posed... and no picture, I am sure, can ever have given the artist more trouble, for my father held strong views concerning the relationship of the patron to the painter, who ought, he inwardly maintained, to occupy the same position as a hound to a dog—or, as for that, of a mouse to a cat—being created and placed before him to be worried, gnawed and teased... My father, who only admired in a female small, Du Maurier-like features, pointed out to the painter that my sister's nose deviated slightly from the perpendicular, and hoped that he would emphasize this flaw. This request much incensed Sargent, obviously a very kind and considerate man; and he showed plainly that he regarded this as no way in which to speak of her personal aspect in front of a very shy and unsuperstitious child of 11. Perhaps, too, he may already have divined in her face and physique the germ of a remarkable and distinguished appearance which was later to appeal particularly to painters. At any rate, he made her nose straight in his canvas and my father's nose crooked, and absolutely refused to alter either of them, whatever my father might say."

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CLOSE-UP

'I Am an Electric Eel in a Pool of Catfish'

by TIMOTHY GREEN

She sits proud and erect in a wheel chair, staring haughtily from beneath a bizarre, deep-dish hat, shrouded in a red velvet gown, a gold collar at her throat, her long, delicate hands encrusted with enormous aquamarine rings. She sips a dry martini and darts glances from her hooded eyes at the guests who have come to pay her court. For half a century now Dame Edith Sitwell, tall, elegant, slightly sinister, has been a focal point of attention and controversy for the literary world of Britain, known, loved and hated as a poet, a writer of stimulating prose, a conversationalist of exceptional wit and a champion of all that is fresh and exciting in the arts. Yet, she insists, "I am not an eccentric. It's just that I am more alive than most people. I am an unpoplar electric eel in a pool of catfish."

In her poetry she has fought an enduring battle with critics and an often uncomprehending and conservative public who sought to dismiss a poet who could write, in her historic *Fuade*:

*Cried the navi-blue ghost
Of Me Belates
The allegro Negro cocktail-
shaker,
"Why did the cock crow,
Why am I lost
Down in the endless road to Infinity
1988.2"*

The first public performance of *Fuade*, a series of poems with musical accompaniment, was received in 1923 with such fury that Dame Edith recalls, "I was nearly lynched, the audience was so angry." Headlines the next morning reported "Drivel They Paid To Hear." "But," wrote a critic, "*Fuade* was shock treatment with a vengeance for the sleepy-sickness of poetry." Over the decades both critics and public have responded to the shock treatment and Dame

Edith has become both accepted and revered. She is the first poet to be made a D.B.E. (Dame of the British Empire). When she celebrated her 75th birthday this fall with a special concert at London's Royal Festival Hall, at which she read a selection of her poems and at which *Fuade* was performed, the standing applause of the sell-out audience confirmed the special place that she has won herself in English literary life. Even *The Times* took a whole page out of the concert program to apologize for its 1923 review of *Fuade*'s first performance and for having "so obviously failed to spot a winner." Conceded *The Times* pontifically, "On very rare occasions, and when the stature of a great artist is at stake, *The Times* is not afraid to eat its words." Said Dame Edith, "I always win if I have a fair field. Sometimes I am out for years but I get my own way in the end."

From her childhood at the Sitwell family ancestral home, Rensshaw in Derbyshire, "I always had a great feeling for poetry and music. But there was not much poetry to be read at home, and I didn't hit it off with my parents." Her father and mother could not understand this shy, slim girl's love of poetry and did everything to discourage her interest. Their one portugal venture was to try to make her learn "The boy stood on the burning deck." "Somehow," she recalls, "I just could not learn it. I thought it such an idiotic poem—after all, if the deck was burning why didn't he get off?"

But she found sympathy and understanding in her brothers Osbert and Sacheverell, both of whom also grew up to be distinguished writers. "One of my first memories," says Sacheverell, "is of her copying down poems by every conceivable poet. She was always determined to be remarkable and she

has succeeded." So great was parental opposition that not until she was 23 was she able to write her first full-length poem "I was so bullied that I could not write. But then I had measles and was able to get away from them."

Finally she made the break with her parents and set up in her own top-floor apartment in Rayswater. Although she had little money and frequently was not sure where the next week's rent would come from, she entertained an endless stream of visitors with strong Indian tea and poems, some.

She looked and dressed like a Tudor monarch. "I've always had a great affinity for Queen Elizabeth," she says. "We were born on the same day of the month (Sept. 19th) and about the same hour of the day and I was extremely like her when I was young." She has written two books on her favorite queen, *Funfare for Elizabeth* and her new *The Queens and the Hire*, a monumental evocation of the great monarch.

Ever since she was 18, Dame Edith has favored medieval-style clothes. "When I was young I was made to wear tweeds and boat-shaped hats and fluffy pale pink and blue dresses in the evening and I hated them, but when I was 18 I was given four pounds so I went to a sale and bought a long black velvet dress with long sleeves. Everybody was quite shocked and horrified for in those days young

girls simply didn't wear black velvet. I realized at once the shock value of my long black velvet and I knew I was right to look different from the other girls because I was different and individual. I've never looked back. I really believe people would stop believing in God if I started wearing tweeds."

It was not her get-up but her stimulating mind, and the fresh explosion of poetry which poured from it, that brought visitors streaming. In the preface of her latest book of poems, *The Outcasts*, published on her 75th birthday, she sums up her feeling about poetry. "It is as unseeing to ask what is the use of poetry as it would be to ask what is the use of religion."

Poetry is the defecation of reality, and one of its purposes, amongst others, is to show that the dimensions of man are as Sir Arthur Eddington said "half way between those of an atom and a star." She entertained many of her visitors by reading her poems aloud in her soft, clear voice, her enunciation and rhythm always poised to perfection. "I wrote some of my poems especially for

CONTINUED

SITWELLS ON TV: Guarded by her cat Shadow, Dame Edith's home scenes carry her picture and that of Sacheverell (left) in BBC version of *This Is Your Life*.



IMPERIOUS POET. In her wheel chair in front of Royal Festival Hall stage, Dame Edith Sitwell awaits the start of rehearsal for her 75th birthday poetry reading.

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SITWELL CONTINUED

my own voice." *Faça* is of course the prime example, and her performances of it down the years have never been equalled. In each decade her poetry has been inspired by the people and the world around her. It was a gay young South American who inspired *Faça* in the dashing 1920s. In the 1930s it was the sight of the hunger marches to London and in particular of "some rich people who used to give parties in barges on the Thames off the embankment while these wretches huddled on benches. I saw a man, obviously suffering from T.B., beating on an empty food tin with a mutton bone . . . that put in my mind the poem *Gold Coast Customs*."

In the 1940s it was the blitz in Sheffield which gave birth to her *Still Falls the Rain*. And the devastation of Hiroshima in 1945 was the spark for her *Durge for the New Sunrise*, a fair cry from the gay South of France:

*And the ray from that heat came
soundless, shook the sky
As if in search of food, and
squeezed the stems
Of all that grows on the earth
till they were dry—
And drank the marrow of the
bone.*

In the 1950s the Korean war and a photograph of Korean children asleep in the snow provoked *The War Orphans*:

*The snow is the blood of these
poor Dead . . . they have
no other—
These children, old in the dog's
scale for years, too old
For the hopeless breast—ghosts
for whom there is none
to care . . .*

Yet politics as such are a completely closed book for Dame Edith. "I don't know about them, so I hold my tongue. But I do know that we have to pay these enormous taxes in order to send mice up to badger the moon."

"Listening to music" is one of two hobbies that Dame Edith lists in *What's What*. The other is "solence," and this accounts for many of her work habits and indeed where she lives. She moved to her present apartment two years ago because construction work next to her club in Mayfair was so noisy. "I could hardly stand the noise and I couldn't do any work for three months. Finally I got onto Scotland Yard to complain. I even threatened to go round and slap the workmen in the face, but the police warned me not to do this. I was delighted with the idea of fight-

ing violently with the police in Grosvenor Street while they tried to restrain me from hitting the workmen."

Dame Edith, however, managed to curb her violent streak and instead moved to peace and quiet in Hampstead. There, as she has always done, she works in bed. "I've never been able to work anywhere else," she explains. "Every woman, no matter what the circumstances, should have a day a week in bed." For years she has rarely risen before lunch. She prefers to spend the morning in bed propped up on pillows, surrounded by oceans of paper and books. She may get up for lunch, rest in bed again in the afternoon, then get up to receive her visitors at 5:30. Sitting proudly in her wheel chair—she always appears in public in a wheel chair these days—she sips her dry martini. Around on the walls of her apartment are paintings and drawings recalling the friendships of a lifetime. On the bookshelf is a second folio of Shakespeare, dated 1632, first editions of Pope and Ben Jonson. Two cats, a Siamese named Shadow and a big ginger one called Leo, curl themselves like acrobats around the furniture. "I've always had cats whenever I could," says Dame Edith as Shadow clambers onto her lap. "They're graceful and remote. They don't like you unless you take trouble with them."



She remembers a working visit to Hollywood and meeting Marilyn Monroe. "I liked her very much, largely because she was ill treated. She was like a sad ghost. She wasn't nearly as sexy as men liked to imagine. She was a sad, sad, lonely girl. She would have made a wonderful Ophelia."

Her great project at present is her memoirs, which she busily writes every morning in bed, spelling them out longhand with her fountain pen. "I have never mastered a typewriter. I am a complete blank on machines. And to write poetry I have to have a pen because I have to feel what I am writing with my fingers." Her memoirs will be called *Taken Care Of* because, she hastens to explain, "All the money I ever had was taken out of me by hangers-on. And hangers-on have taught me the meaning of immortality." She has no deadline for completing the memoirs. "I'm having lots of fun with them but no one will ever speak to me again once they are published."

DRAMATIC DELIVERY. During her reading in Royal Festival Hall, Dame Edith throws her head back as she recites seven poems in her soft, precise voice.

She wore:

long dresses --
great jewels
turbans

XXXX

Who the Sitwells are

At Renishaw 700 years

Descendants of Macbeth Plantagenet kings ... Duke
of Beaufort, ... Marquis of Conyngham (ancestress was mistress
of George IV. Francis Bacon. Earl of Southampton - to whom
Shakespeare dedicated VENUS AND ADONIS.

Old aristocracy -- no titles --- first rate eccentrics.

Mothers family -- father lived on seashore, had red carpet
spread from his house to beach.

Mother was great Edwardian beauty --

Father -- Sir George -- medievalist, scholar, -- Modigliani
and Montegufoni... blue-stenciled cows. Build a
mountain here, creat a lake there.

#1
Childhood of three:

Sir Osbert, shy and reserved and imaginative -- sent to
typical English upper-class boy's school and into the
guards, where he fell asleep -- on horse -- at parade.

Edith -- too tall; wore torturing brace; the Sargeant portcail
with her nose crooked; was good at the piano, so was made
to learn cello. Mother wanted her to be typical Edwardian
debutante; Father wanted ~~what~~ -- princess, beauty,
anything but what he got.

Discovered Swinburne -- since she simply studied at home.

Got wonderful governess, Helen Rootham.

Family scandal.

Helen persuaded father to let her chaperone Edith in an apartment.

After the War:

Started a small publication -- a kind of Poetry Annual --

Wheels -- the Sitwells, "ancy Guanard, other bright young people.

She has always been fascinated by what she calls ~~poet~~ "Texture" in poetry. And this ~~poet~~ is a ~~poet~~ technical matter.

I think it's a mixture of prosody and synesthesia. She observes that certain sounds are actually longer than others. For instance, it takes longer to say the word "Doom" than it does to say "kick."

Traditionally poetry was broken metrically into feet ~~made up~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ of accented and unaccented syllables. For instance, you all know that an iamb is an unaccented followed by accented.

~~The kickxxxxxxbyxxxxxx~~
The ^{kick} ~~kick~~ is by the ~~kick~~ cliff.

My Faye was plagued by doom.

~~Rix~~
In psychology, you may have studied the phenomenon called "synesthesia." ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Synesthesia is ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ a subjective sensation of ~~xxxxxx~~ one sense when another ~~xxxxx~~ sense is being stimulated. Particularly true of sound color.

Some people, when they hear Bach, see architectural ~~forms~~ in their mind's eye -- blocks, pillars, and so forth. I knew a girl who said that the note "B-flat" was a bright clear blue color. Simplest of all -- "I got so angry I saw red."

From Rimbaud, the ~~French~~ great and mad young French poet of the 19th century, she got the idea of the "studied derangement of senses" -- when you smell ~~xxx~~ Chanel Number 5, you see grey shot with orange. The color "purple" is, in certain shades, a tragic color.

There was just one step from this to her ascribing emotions to vowel sounds --

OOO of Doom and gloom was a long sound and a sad one.

~~xxx~~ The short "i" in click, zip, pippin -- ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~
takes a short time to say and is almost a
sassy sort of sound.

Now -- enough of these technicalities.

In 1921, Edith Sitwell was working ~~madly~~ away on a series of poetic exercises. She was ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ actually practicing the art of poetry -- preparing herself to be a poet. When you want to be a tennis player, you practice your strokes on the tennis court. You bat balls back and forth. You develop your backhand -- or whatever.

~~Miss~~ Osbert and Sacheverell at that time were sharing ~~the~~ a house with a very bright young composer, ~~xxx~~ William Walton -- who has since become one of the major English composers. Walton and Miss Sitwell decided to work together on a combination of poetic recitation and music.

A small chamber orchestra.

The voice was to be used as a musical instrument. The music would reflect the lilting fun of the poems, but was to be no less important than the poetry.

So that the personality of the poet would not intrude into the performance, it was decided that the curtain ~~xxxxxxxx~~ on the stage would be drawn. The speaker would sit behind this painted curtain and, in time to the music, chant -- for want of a better word -- the poetry through a megaphone. They didn't have microphones in those days.

Miss Sitwell wrote a series of poems which were actually exercises in texture and prosody. There are themes that wind their way through

the poems -- images are presented to you -- in some of the poems there ~~xxxxxxx~~ is almost a story line. But the main thing -- art can be FUN. Miss Sitwell was drunk with words and the enchantment of ideas and had a strong sense of the satirical. But get the scene. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ The theater crowded with the type of old ladies who go to concerts ... friends of the family ... curiosity-seekers who knew the reputation of the brilliant young Sitwells -- Colonel Blimps ... Lady Somebody or other with her lorgnette ... young artists... and Noel Coward, just making his first splash as a chic young fashionable playwright. ~~xxxxxxx~~ The chamber orchestra started playing ... strange, shy, aristocratic Miss Sitwell started reciting ... and all Hell broke loose. ~~Sxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

*Don't put your
lights on de stage,
Mrs. Westinghouse.
which is v. funny
"I see you again"*

At about this point, young Mr. Noel Coward drew himself up, flung his opera cape around his thin shoulders, and walked out in a high dudgeon. People complained that Edith Sitwell was trying to make a fool of them -- that this was nothing but nonsense. In a way, they were right -- it is nonsense -- but high nonsense -- wit, enchantment, ~~xxx~~ They were not outraged by Alice in Wonderland -- The Jabberwocky was something they were used to -- why should they take umbrage at "Long Steel Grass ... white soldiers pass ... the light is braying like an ass."

Her poetic diction threw them. Actually, it is not much stranger than Shakespeare. ~~xxxxx~~ ~~xxxx~~ She made use of -- among other things -- this synesthesia I was talking about. But if you LISTEN and THINK,

it won't seem strange at all.

For instance, a phrase of hers that I like enormously, being an amateur gardener, is

"Emily-coloured primulas."

Primulas are simple country flowers -- primroses actually -- pink, lilac, yellow. Not showy.

Emily is an old-fashioned country name -- a little prim. ~~Yxxx~~ If ~~xxxxxxx~~ you don't understand what I mean, think about Ava Gardner, Brigitte Bardot, Theda Bara. ~~Nxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ You have immediately a sexy image that leaps to mind. Well, consider if it were Emily Gardner -- that sounds like the daughter of your minister.

(#2) What else
say about
Facad

~~xxxx~~ The attacks ~~xxxxxx~~ that she and her brothers suffered as a result of FACADE did not -- thank God -- stop her from writing poetry. She continued to develop throughout the twenties.

Elegy on Dead Fashions --

delightful longish poem with some of the feeling of
Pope's Rape of the Lock -- artificial but acutely
observant.

*Betty
critic
#3*
vision of the world
~~xxxx~~ Her was not even then solely a gay one. Far from it. She had known tragedy and humiliation since childhood and was sympathetic to the tragedy of mankind. The fashionable word "engaged" would best describe her pity for the poor and weak, her despising of ~~the~~ injustice, and the horror with which she viewed the "Dance of Death" of contemporary civilization. Old values failing ... nothing in their place.

Wrote long poem "GOLD COAST CUSTOMS" in 1929 --

certainly having read THE WASTELAND

~~xxxxxxxx~~ Her poem about the horrors of contemporary civilization uses as a framework certain cannibalistic customs in AFRICA.

Miss Acotham very ill -- she didn't write again for many years having to nurse her old friend.

By this time, FACADE was recognized as one of the brightest minor masterpieces of the 20th century, and the Sitwells were revered as important artists.

Miss Sitwell became increasingly concerned with religion. She had read deeply in THE GOLDEN BOUGH -- and other anthropological works of this sort. Philosophy ... mysticism.

Her poetry becomes increasingly mystic ... and superb.

She sees herself -- or her poetic mask is -- of a kind of Ceres, earth-

mother -- and therefore all humanity -- waiting for the sun's gold
to bring fruitfulness and salvation.

#4

'I am all woman'

From this position, it was ~~with~~ almost inevitable that her next step
would be conversion to the Roman Catholic faith. She studied under
that great converter of English intelligentsia, Father D'Arcy.

To finish, I would like to read a ~~xx~~ magnificent war poem -- her
most famous later poem, I suppose. It anticipates her Catholicism
~~xx~~ and shows her ~~xx~~ preoccupation with the tragedy of the
human condition.

#5

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DR. EDITH SITWELL TO PRESENT "FAÇADE"

WITH MUSIC BY WILLIAM WALTON AT MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The first complete American performance of FAÇADE with words by Dr. Edith Sitwell and music by William Walton will be given by Dr. Edith Sitwell and a six-piece orchestra, directed by Frederick Prausnit, in the Auditorium of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, on January 19 at 9 p.m. The performance will be introduced by Sir Osbert Sitwell. Designs executed by the Spanish painter Esteban Frances will be projected on a screen through which Dr. Sitwell's voice and the instrumental music will be amplified.

The performance is being held for the benefit of the Museum's Program Fund. Tickets at \$15 are available only to members of the Museum of Modern Art. The Museum Auditorium seats only 496 people, and requests for tickets will be filled strictly in order of receipt. Any tickets not sold to members by January 12 will be placed on public sale at \$24 each.

THERE WILL BE NO COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS. RELATED PRESS MAY ATTEND THE DRESS REHEARSAL ON JANUARY 17 AT 11:30 A. M. BY MAKING RESERVATIONS. TELEPHONE CI. 5-8900, EXT. 228. PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE TAKEN ONLY AFTER THE REHEARSAL, WHICH WILL BE OVER AT ABOUT 12:45.

A NOTE ON FAÇADE

by Dr. Edith Sitwell

"The poems in Façade are abstract patterns, in the sense in which certain pictures are abstract patterns. I wrote them at a time when a revivification of rhythmic patterns in English poetry had become necessary, owing to the verbal deadness then prevalent.

"The poems tell no story, convey no moral. Some have a violent exhilaration, great gaiety, others have sadness veiled by gaiety, many are exercises in transcendental technique - virtuoso exercises; but they are inspired, too, by high spirits. Many were meant to make people laugh. But a section of the public perceived that what Doctor Walton and I did was done unconsciously. We were clowns, tumblers, and acrobats, malgré nous. Alternately, we were pulling the legs of the public - a vulgar and stupid activity of which we have never been guilty.

"The fury inspired by the work was interspersed with loud laughter at our expense. It was, of course, impossible that we could know what we were doing!

"The manner of presenting the work was the idea of Sir Osbert Sitwell, who devised the use of curtain and mask in order to eliminate the

personality of the reciter. The use of a megaphone - found for me by Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell (this was, at that time, the only instrument by means of which the sound of the words could be amplified) - was in order that the words might be heard above the music; for no other reason.

"But it was perceived at once that, in direct contradiction to the whole reason for these uses, I was wishing to obtrude my personality.

"The public fled in a panic. Waylaying a passing postman, and the fireman of the hall in which the first public performance took place, they asked their opinion. They opined that we were mad. A well-known revue-writer and other such custodians of the purity of the English language, and of style in literature, were of the same opinion. We were subjected to floods of abuse, often of an exceedingly personal and scurrilous nature.

"But that is twenty-five years ago, and the work is now, in England, a most popular entertainment. For we have been forgiven. The postman is at peace, the revue-writer has ceased to rail. The fireman is no longer called in."

Henry
in family
Marion

Price for 2 sat + 100000
of 100000 100000 100000
1000000

Scotland
Jullian
1000000

By the Lake

Man from in 1000000
1000000

Yule in 1000000
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Pat
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Wile in 1000000
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DAME EDITH PHOTOGRAPHED AT A LITERARY PARTY
'His Portrait of Me Has . . . No Hands'

—AP Wirephotos

Famed Poet Describes Rare Hazards of Sitting for Portrait

By DAME EDITH SITWELL

LONDON—It was, I believe, in the year 1921 that I first met Percy Wyndham Lewis. In that year, and for some time after, he rarely absented himself from the company of myself and my brothers for more than a few days, being constantly at my brothers' house in Swan Walk, Chelsea, and at my flat; and there were moments when I wondered what were the exact sentiments by Mary towards her Little Lamb.

There are men who seem to have been born without relations but in a collar. And Lewis was one of these. He remained immured in this faithful friend, and I think it must have figured on his passport. Certainly one had only to add up the ring on it (made by time), as one adds up the rings on a palm tree or on the horns of an antelope, to arrive at some estimate of his age.

LEWIS VISITED us at Renishaw, and this visit, alas, was not entirely happy, for he mislaid that collar of his on the morning of his arrival, and could not come down to luncheon until he had found it. But eventually Robins, my brother Osbert's delightful ex-soldier-servant (by this time butler at Renishaw), tracked it down, and it returned to Lewis's neck, much as a weary and rather dilapidated blackbird might return to its nest.

This temporary parting of the ways in Osbert's house caused Lewis, after three years of brooding on the subject, to believe that Osbert, Sacheverell and I are evil symbols of the decay of civilization, and to denounce us in a book called "The Apes of God." (God being, in this case, Lewis, although the only resemblance between that gentleman and his Creator lay in both having brooded over Chaos.) It is sad that, with his considerable gifts, Lewis never succeeded in producing a wholly satisfactory picture or book.

The pictures appear to have been painted by a mailed fist in a cotton glove. The novels are crammed with Gargantuan distortions of Lewis's own charac-

ter, which yet threatened his existence so that we are reminded of Swift, in his last illness, threatening his likeness in a mirror.

BEFORE THE collar calamity, I sat to Lewis for the portrait of me that is now in the Tate Gallery, and also for several drawings. I sat to him indeed, every day excepting Sundays for 10 months. But in the end, his manner became so threatening that I ceased to pose for him, and his portrait of me has, consequently, no hands.

Lewis's life was overshadowed by real, or imaginary, dangers. He was, for instance, a prey to the conviction that art critics Roger Fry and Clive Bell roosted, permanently, on the roof of his studio, in order to observe his slightest movement.

Then, too, there either were (or were not) the rats. At one time, Lewis got it into his head that these were lurking amidst the confusion. "D'you mind rats?" he inquired of me one day. I said that I did. "Well, they're here all right," he said. "Night and day. Day and night. But I'll try and keep them off!" with which he gave a swish to his brush and went on painting.

PERSONALLY I think the Gargantuanism in his outlook, to which I have referred, exaggerated the size of mice into that of rats. For mice were undoubtedly present. As time went on—according to subsequent sitters—the mice, unhampered in their activities, grew bolder. They would loll against the furniture and stare in a most in-

solent manner and, when a very great poet was sitting to Lewis, they actually went so far as to climb on to his knee, and seemed to be scrutinizing his face in a disapproving manner.

So at last he was driven to buy a large gong, and when their behavior became quite intolerable, he would bang this at the opening of the mousehole. They would then retreat.

Not only the life of Lewis but those of his sitters were, undoubtedly, full of uncertainties. For one thing, all the objects on the floor of the studio whisked past one at such a terrific rate (propelled by some unseen force, or, perhaps, by the hope of escaping) that one was never sure what one was stepping on.

From time to time, Lewis would give a savage kick to the warring and varying objects which hid the floor from view and which seemed (when not trying to escape) to spend their whole time in clamoring for his attention, so that he frequently presented to sitters the appearance of a harassed mother returning home with her wearing and quarrelsome offspring after a particularly noisy Bank Holiday.

POOR MAN! The only real fault in Lewis was an unconquerable suspicion of everybody who admired his great potential gifts, seeing in that admiration a plot to gain his confidence, and then hand him over to his real or imaginary enemies. He longed, I think, to be liked, and would have been by everybody: But he simply did not know how to receive affection. My two brothers were faithful friends to him, I was loyal to him, in the teeth of a good deal of opposition. He repaid us and others who had been inflexibly loyal to him in "The Apes of God." In this, incidentally, he more than hinted that I am a woman of infamous moral character.

I am not.

